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875 were turned over to Greece and Yugoslavia, respectively, after the first World War; while Dimiter was from the section of Thrace which Bulgaria was forced to surrender. Since the teachers had such backgrounds it was no wonder that adorning one of the classrooms was a sign, "NEMA MIR DOKATO NEUILLY" or "There will be no peace as long as the Treaty of Neuilly is in force."

The director of the school was a vigorous woman with splendid preparation for her task. She told me on several occasions how disappointed she was that her teachers took so little interest in helping the peasants improve their way of life. They were supposed to spend Sunday afternoons visiting the homes of their pupils in an effort to advise parents in matters of child care and standards of hygiene. Actually, the teachers, being all too human, preferred to spend the week end in Sofia rather than reform the unenthusiastic adults.

[565] 527 659 The intelligentsia were usually seen in their glory at some great occasion such as the celebration of an important holiday. The event which caused most excitement during my six years of residence in Bulgaria was the birth of Prince Simeon, heir apparent to the throne of his father, King Boris. The exercises which were held in Dragalevtsy four days after the royal birth in 1937 showed how the intellectuals worked hand in hand, since the school, the church, and the state were so closely allied.

•[796] The crowd had to wait at least forty-five minutes for the priests from the monastery who were to help Father Sava with the liturgy of the *vodosvet,* or consecration of the holy water, whose sprinkling gave official religious recognition to the closing of the school year. Then the mayor began to speak the high-sounding phrases which the villagers loved to hear. He told them how significant for Bulgaria was the birth of Prince Simeon.

> June Sixteenth [he said] will be written in golden letters in the history of Bulgaria. June Sixteenth marks the day when an heir was born to the throne of Bulgaria. Our school house has no name, so I recommend that we petition for the right to call our school "Prince Simeon II." The first Simeon who reigned a thousand years ago was called Simeon the Great. I feel sure that Simeon the Second will likewise go down in history as Simeon the Great.
>
> [871] In honor of this great occasion, the Government has decreed that the marks of every student will be raised, so that no one will fail in any subject. [Hurrah!

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back street. I do know that the inarticulate peasant woman who sat for hours crouched on the sidewalk wondered at the strange styles of women's clothing, and that the village man, in his wandering, coveted some glittering object in a shopwindow for his child. In the late afternoon as they went home, and during the days that followed, man and wife talked about this trip to market. For them it had been a shared adventure.

Other activities which the family members shared besides the tasks of home and field and the trip to market were the holidays. The traditional holidays were religious, while the ones most recently introduced were patriotic.

January sixth was *Malka Koleda,* or Little Christmas. Many Bulgarian villagers would tell you that Christ was really born on the day before Christmas, but his birth was not made known until the following day. For that reason, great emphasis was laid upon the celebration of Little Christmas, or Christmas Eve, with the meal on Christmas Eve as the most important part of the season's festivities.

Each time I spent Christmas in a Bulgarian village home I was deeply impressed with the simplicity and beauty of its symbolism. I was a foreigner and a Protestant nonbeliever. Bai Milush and his family received me as though I were one of their own large family. Carefully and patiently they explained to me each bit of ceremony and tradition and symbolism. Often a ceremony was repeated so I could photograph it. There was not a single appurtenance of the Western Christmas in the household; even the date was different, but the Christmas spirit meant more there than anywhere else I had ever been.

To commemorate Christ's birth in a manger, straw was laid on the floor and covered with a blanket which served as the tablecloth for the evening's repast. The whole family gathered around this blanket after an incense urn had been carried as a good luck symbol from the iconostas to each room of the house and to all of the animal stalls. Because the meal was late in starting, three of the smallest children had gone to sleep, one in a crib and the other two on a wooden bed. In order to get the meal under way without further formalities, the women passed hot, fiery *rakiya* (plum brandy) to each person and stood patiently until the single glass had been emptied

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before filling it for the next in turn; wine followed *rakiya* as the single glass continued to perform its simple function. There was a china cup, to be sure, but it was used by those preferring water. 796

Then the real ceremony began. The loaves of bread, crudely adorned on top with symbols standing for plows, sheep, the house, and sheaves of wheat, were passed to the head of the household, who broke the loaves with great solemnity. The loaves contained many notched pegs, the number of notches standing for objects on the farm; somewhere in the loaf was also hidden a coin, far more coveted than the notched pieces of wood. I, as the guest, broke open my bread first, only to find a three-notched peg, and was laughingly told that I would have to tend the sheep during the year and would not be as lucky as my neighbor who got the two-notched peg representing the cow. Still luckier was the elder brother who found the one-notched peg representing the house. A shrill shout of joy told at once that Mitko, the eleven-year-old boy, had found the coin and would be the luckiest of all.

The excitement subsided as all began to eat heartily of the special food which the women had been preparing all afternoon. Every home followed the same traditional menu, which featured the meatless main dish of pumpkin pie or *banitsa,* soggy in spite of long baking in hot ashes. The family, in between bites of *banitsa,* spooned with great gusto into the compote of stewed prunes to which pounded garlic and nuts had been added. Everyone had to partake of this for, as the villagers assured me with a twinkle in their eye, "it makes hair grow under the arms." 262 796

The other traditional dish was *surmi,* a combination of onions, peppers, raisins, and rice rolled up and stewed in brine-soaked cabbage leaves. The compote and *surmi* were eaten from communal bowls.

The meal was concluded by the serving of withered apples, stored just for this occasion, and nuts cracked in the mouth of a neighbor who soon discovered the guest's unwillingness to risk his teeth for a kernel. As the men got out their cigarettes a girl rose to pass, in lieu of a match, a live coal, held with tongs, from the sheet metal stove.

On important occasions like this, the animals were not forgotten. A piece of the specially prepared bread was dipped into the compote 796

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● 796 and given to each animal, though the chickens tussled over a large chunk thrown to them. Sometime during the night straw was reverently taken from beneath the blanket and tied in little tufts onto all of the fruit trees "in order to ensure a good crop of fruit the following season."

The feast was concluded around midnight. All of the family retired with the exception of Trayko, the young man with a sacred duty to perform: He had to watch the yule log *(budnik)* and see that it burned continuously until the rising of the sun. This log had been chosen with care up on the mountainside and brought down to the house on a crude sled. As the flames crept up its gnarled sides Trayko let his imagination run riot until he heard the sounds of husky voices cursing the dogs out in the yard. He knew that a group of friends who had been out caroling were stopping to have a word with him. The visitors were carrying lanterns and staves, which they waved recklessly because of the mixture of drinks and food given them at every house in which they had sung. They got a late start this particular Christmas Eve because they had had to go to Sofia to sing over the radio. Trayko was particularly anxious to hear about this experience. Before leaving, the carolers sang for the benefit of the now wide-awake family, but found difficulty in consuming all the food and drink offered to them. Trayko's mother insisted upon putting on the staff of each boy doughnut-shaped pieces of bread, prepared for this purpose.

On Christmas Day the rising sun did little to warm the wind-swept village. A few of the most pious men and women were returning from the early morning service, but most of the villagers were sleeping late. When at length the people got up they began to indulge in quantities of pork meat, for every home had killed a pig for the grand occasion. Those who had kept the long six-week church fast found the taste of meat most pleasing. In the afternoon the people gathered in the main square to dance, to visit, to watch the antics of tipsy men. Around midafternoon a lively band struck up a *horo* tune and the dance got under way. The chief social gatherings throughout the village at Christmas time took place at the homes of those named Hristo or Hristina (Christo or Christina), since these

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individuals were celebrating their name days with appropriate hospitality. 796 ●

Bulgarian children did not hang up their stockings on Christmas Eve but, if their parents were being influenced by modern ideas, did find a present or two at the foot of their bed when they woke up in the morning. They immediately ran to kiss the hands of their father and mother. They called Santa Claus *"Dedo Koleda,"* which meant "Grandfather Christmas." He did not wear a bright red, white-furred costume but had on a brown homespun outfit that corresponded more nearly to the peasant's manner of dress.

On these ceremonial occasions the father and mother presided with quiet dignity over the celebrations. They were accorded every respect by their children. As the Christmases passed, the couple's feeling of partnership deepened. Each year left its accumulation of memories, about which husband and wife said little, but about which they could feel sure the other was thinking. [593]

Christmas and the holidays that followed were only a prelude to *Velikden*—literally, the Great Day—the day of Christ's resurrection. On the eighth Sunday before Easter, or *Mesni Zagovezni* (meat fast), all those who kept the long Easter fast stopped eating meat. The following Sunday was *Sirni Zagovezni* (cheese fast) after which those fasting gave up all milk products. This Sunday itself was a day of great feasting on all sorts of cheese products. On both Sundays fires were lit; on *Mesni Zagovezni* there was a great fire at night in the village square, and on *Sirni Zagovezni* almost every household lighted a fire in the yard around which the youngsters waved burning straw stuck in the cleft end of a stick and chanted an ancient couplet [785]

Orata, Kopata!
Dai mi, chicho, momata

whose significance had vanished with the ages.

On this Sunday, and the three days preceding, all quarrels among the villagers were settled, everyone visiting his neighbors and relatives to beg pardon for real or fancied offenses. The quiet that reigned over the village on the evening of *Sirni Zagovezni* was little short of wonderful. At the break of day the children had risen to kiss their 796 578

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parents' hands and ask pardon for past misbehavior, and all day long there had been a wandering in and out of homes by men to meet some other men with whom they had been at odds, and by a handshake to ask pardon.

I came into the tavern late in the afternoon of that day. It was snowing heavily and the warmth from the stove felt good. Near me sat a man rubbing his chilled hands. After we had exchanged formal greetings, I asked him where he was going, the usual village question.

"I'm going back to my village, eleven miles farther on."

"Where have you been?"

"I've been over to Durvanitsa [two miles away] to visit my parents and beg their forgiveness."

"Have you had any trouble with your parents during the past year that would make you take such a long walk in such bad weather?"

Patient with me, a foreigner, he said, "No, I've had no troubles with my parents. I've been to visit them. That is the custom."

A little later he went out into the snow to resume his eleven-mile tramp back home. His heart was at ease, for he had fulfilled the age-old custom of *Sirni Nedelya* (Cheese Sunday).

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The Saturday following Cheese Sunday was *Todorovden* (the day of St. Theodore, patron saint of horses). Then the children stopped fasting, for their young bodies could not stand seven weeks of a milkless diet. Early in the morning they, together with some of the old people, took communion in the village church. Many of the young men visited the village of Gorna Banya, which had its *Subor* on *Todorovden*. There was a great deal of horseback riding and racing up and down the muddy village streets, in honor of St. Theodore and "to protect the horses from worms."

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Eight days before Easter was the Saturday called *Lazarovden* (St. Lazarus's Day). *Lazarki* groups, consisting of six girls each, went from house to house to sing and dance, according to the villagers in honor of the resurrection of Lazarus. They were given coins and eggs by the peasants who believed that these girls would bring them good luck in the months to come.

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On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Passion Week, all the people fasted and refrained from work. Even a stranger felt a certain awe at the grave anticipation filling the village. On Saturday evening all the village gathered in the church for the midnight service. The long liturgy led the silent, densely packed worshipers into a mood of growing suspense, emphasizing in word and music the tragedy of the tomb. But at midnight, reputedly the time when Christ's tomb burst open, a startling transformation took place. The glorious Easter hymn "Christ Is Risen" thundered forth to the clanging of the church bell. At first it was stately and restrained, but as the magic of its message spread, a joyousness exalted the worshipers. All rushed to light the tapers which they had held unlit throughout the service. They had been waiting for this moment for the holy fire sent down each Easter from heaven. Carefully they watched the taper while exchanging the happy greetings—"Christ is risen," "Risen indeed"—and passing red Easter eggs from palm to palm in lieu of a handshake. The church had come into its own. As the crowd dispersed, each villager protected the sacred fire from the breezes in an effort to reach home with the taper still alight, whereupon it would be blown out and put aside for special use later on.

At home the people broke their long fast by eating the hard-boiled eggs and the *kozunatsi,* or very yellow Easter cakes. Then a feast followed. For forty days afterwards the spell of the occasion was often recalled as pious villagers greeted each other with those sacred words, "Christ is risen," and received the answer, "Risen indeed."

Another holiday of importance to every family was May 6, or St. George's Day. The head of the house, no matter how poor he might be, contrived to have a lamb killed for the festivities. When the meat was roasted to a delicious flavor the family gathered, often in a sunny meadow with other relatives, to feast. The husband and wife planned carefully for this day, and together saw to it that everyone enjoyed himself. Though the husband might later go to the tavern to be with other men, he and his wife had experienced again an event for which both prepared and which both enjoyed.

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"To commemorate Christ's birth . . ." *See page 106.*

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"The loaves of bread, crudely adorned on top . . ." *See page 107.*

[Facing p. 112]

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". . . the carolers sang. Trayko's mother puts on the staff . . . doughnut-shaped pieces of bread prepared for this purpose . . ." *See page 108.*

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"*Lazarki* groups . . . went from house to house to sing and dance in honor of the resurrection of Lazarus . . ." *See page 110.*

[facing p. 113]

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Epiphany or Bogoyavlenie on January 19 commemorated the baptism of Christ. The Dragalevtsy boys and girls knew how the day was celebrated in other villages near the rivers or the sea. There the altar cross was thrown into the icy water. Naked youths dove in and struggled violently for it. The winner, carrying the cross, then collected money from the crowd. More important even than the money was the feeling that he would be fortunate during the coming year. But Epiphany did not pass unnoticed in Dragalevtsy, even though the river was nothing more than a racing mountain brook. The priest brought the cross out to sell at auction. The buyer, of course, returned it to the priest, but with his purchase received the assurance of God's blessing in the days to come. One year, a hiker happened to be passing through on his way up to the top of Vitosha. He saw the crowd gathered around the priest, bought the cross, went to the tavern for a free drink, returned the cross to the priest, and went on his way up the mountain. Peasants marveled for some time afterwards over the dispatch he showed in the whole affair.

Formerly on this day, children were christened with cold instead of lukewarm water, and all brides of that year were bathed in the river. When I asked why such custom was no longer practiced, Bai Angel, the village registrar, shrugged: "Oh, then the people were stronger and could stand such treatment."

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On the previous day the children had all awaited the priest's arrival to sprinkle holy water in every room of the house. As we have already seen, many families collected bottles of the water that had been especially blessed for Epiphany, in the belief that it would cure various illnesses later on.

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Bulgarian boys and girls never celebrated their birthdays. Instead, they made much of their name days. Each child bore the name of some saint, with a special day on the church calendar. Each Ivan (John) celebrated on the day following Epiphany, January 20; each Grigor (Gregory) on February 7; each Iliya (Elijah) on August 2. And so it ran throughout the year. Those with names not appearing on the calendar generally chose the day of "The Forty Holy Martyrs." Whereas Americans would expect to receive gifts on their birthdays, Bulgarians, especially those who were married, expected to entertain

5: Kemp E-4, 5 (1926-1933)1935
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swinging will be found as specific cures. Weighing seems to be a substitute for swinging, the balance being hung on to certain trees, and weighing itself was a cure for epilepsy.[1]

The practice of shamanistic healing through dance and possession occurs among the Vlahs, and has probably recently been adopted by a few Bulgarian and even by Serbian communities. These customs seem to be popular because they are easily assimilated into an existing system of ideas. They are found at the yearly festival of *Rosalia*[2] or the feast of the *Rusalje*.

[1] Cf. M. Milićević, *Život Srba Seljaka*, p. 288.

[2] The most complete account and a survey of the literature are to be found in M. Arnaudov, *Kukeri i Rusalii* (1920). See also M. J. Majxner, *Dubočka Rusalje*, Godišnica Nikole Čupića, XXXIV (1921), p. 227 *passim*; S. Zahariev, *Geografsko-istoriko-statističesko opisanie na T. Pazardžiksty Kazy* (1870), p. 78.